SPEECH

OF

MR. COBB, OF GEORGIA,

ON THE

OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JANUARY 8, 1846.

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SPEECH.

On motion of Mr. Cobb, the House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the Oregon question.

Mr. COBB (who held the right to the floor from yesterday) addressed the committee. It is not my purpose, sir, (said he,) to detain the committee with a lengthened argument upon the Oregon question. I feel, however, that, under the peculiar circumstances by which this subject is surrounded, I owe it to myself, and to those whom I represent upon this floor, to submit to the House the reasons which have induced me to that course, which I intend to pursue in reference to this question. It is my misfortune, perhaps, upon so grave and important a question, involving so much for weal or for wo to our country, to differ with many of my political friends from the section of the country from which I come, and to differ with a distinguished southern statesman—a man whose voice is generally considered expressive of the feelings of the southern portion of the country; and I may be permitted to remark of that individual—for his patriotism as a man, and his ability as a statesman—I have ever entertained, and still do entertain, the highest regard. But when considering a question of this character, I am compelled, by a sense of duty I owe to myself, and to my own constituents, to disregard every consideration, save that of the honor and the interest of the country, so far as they are involved in the issue. I alone am responsible to that constituency for the course I may pursue here. If it differs from that which others see fit to take, they partake not of the responsibility. It falls alone upon my shoulders. I assume it, Mr. Chairman. The policy I conceive it to be the duty of this country to pursue in reference to the subject brought forward by the resolution reported by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, is already indicated to the House by the fact, that I have concurred in the propriety of that report.* And my purpose is now to submit to this House and to the country, the reasons which have induced me to believe that that policy must be carried out, or the interest of the country weakened —I will not say destroyed.

At this period of time, Mr. Chairman, I should consider I was inflicting upon the House an unnecessary and an unpalatable argument, if I were to attempt to sustain the title by which this country possesses and holds a just claim to the Oregon territory—*to the whole of the Oregon territory.* Whatever opinions may be entertained in other portions of the civilized world; whatever opinions may be entertained by that master-spirit of the nations of the other world, with whom we are now thrown into a contest on the question—in this country but one voice falls upon the ear—but one deep, well-founded opinion exists. No doubts now remain on the minds of American statesmen, that the government of the United States holds a clear and unquestionable title to the whole of the Oregon territory.

I propose not to discuss it; but I desire that this proposition may be considered as admitted; that it shall go before the country in connexion with the argument I propose to make in favor of the policy suggested by the resolution on your table; that it may go to the country as the admitted and indisputable opinion of American statesmen, with scarcely any—if, indeed, any—dissenting voice; that our title to the Oregon territory is thus considered, by us, *clear and unquestionable.*

There is another proposition, Mr. Chairman, which I will not stop to discuss; but I desire to place it, like the one to which I have just alluded, on the footing of an axiomatic fact, that the importance of this territory to our government and our people—whether it is considered in reference to agriculture, to manufactures, or to commerce—is no longer a debatable issue. Not that I consider it a subject commanding the clear approbation and the warm feelings of the West in its behalf, but I desire to raise it higher, and to place it on a loftier pinnacle. It is a national question, side by side with that important national question—the annexation of Texas—which has already received the sanction of this government. For myself, then, and my constituents, I enter a solemn protest against the opinions which may have been advanced here or elsewhere, that the question of Oregon is a western question, or any other sectional question. It is one in which the whole nation feels a deep and a lively interest, and one upon which the whole nation will, sooner or later, speak with a voice approximating unanimity, if we, sir, do our duty.

I do not propose, Mr. Chairman, to detain you, either, with a recital of the long-pending negotiation which has been carried on between the British government and our own, in reference to the adjustment of this perplexing and vexed question. I desire, however, as preliminary to the first, and perhaps the most important reason which I shall submit to you for my support of this measure, to refer very briefly to the state of the negotiation as it now stands between this government and Great Britain. In 1818 our government and the British government entered into a convention, by which it was agreed that, for certain purposes, each of these governments should be entitled to equal privileges within this disputed territory; whether you term it a convention for the purpose of joint occupation, or for the purpose of commerce, navigation, and settlement, (as that is the language of the convention,) is immaterial to my purpose. Subsequently to this con-

*Mr. Cobb is a member of the majority of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, from whom this resolution was reported.

158298

vention of 1818, which was to expire by its own limitation in ten years, the convention was renewed, and the convention renewing the former one continues it in force forever, unless the one or the other government, by giving twelve months' notice of its desire to do so, shall terminate it. During the pendency of this convention, there have been efforts made to settle and adjust this question The claims of the British government have been urged with great power by her statesmen; the claims of our government to the title have been discussed also, and a satisfactory conclusion has been reached in the minds of American statesmen. What are these propositions? Our government has proposed, on more than one occasion, to divide the territory at the 49th degree of north latitude. Some years back, we did, in connexion with this proposition, agree to grant to Great Britain the navigation of the Columbia river. This has been repeated twice, if not oftener. But a few months ago our government proposed that this question should be settled on the 49th degree, but withheld any offer as to the navigation of the Columbia river. During that same period of time, the British government have submitted to our consideration a proposition on which they are willing to adjust this difficulty. That proposition, recently submitted to our government, is a proposition which takes the same parallel of 49 degrees until you reach a certain point on the Columbia river, and then she travels down the main stream of that river to the point where it enters the ocean. When the proposition was last submitted by the government of the United States, (and submitted, sir, as I believe, and as the country believes, in the utmost good faith, and with a sincere desire on the part of our government to settle and adjust the difficulty,) when that proposition was submitted to the British minister, it was not by him referred to his government, but the reply was made that the British government will wait for a more liberal proposition to proceed from the American government. And here we have reached the crisis, as I conceive it, in the adjustment of this Oregon question. We have here presented before us the grounds on which England has proposed to settle the Oregon difficulty; we have before us the proposition on which our government has heretofore agreed to adjust this difficulty. The refusal, and the manner of the refusal, on the part of the British government, will leave no doubt, as it seems to me, on the mind of any of us, that our proposition, which, to say the least of it, is the *ultimatum*, beyond all dispute, of the American government, will never receive the sanction of the British government. It has so been declared to the British government by the Executive of this government, that this is the *ultimatum* beyond which we cannot go.

Now, if you refuse to carry out the recommendation of the President, to give notice to Great Britain to bring to a close this joint occupancy of the Oregon territory, I desire to call the attention of the House to the inference and conclusion which must inevitably be drawn by the British government. Your President has declared that the *ultimatum* has been reached; in the same communication in which he transmits this information to Congress, he informs you that from his knowledge of this negotiation, from the view which he has been enabled to take of all the matters in connexion with the controversy, it is his deliberate conviction that no proposition will ever be made by the British government to which this country can accede, and preserve its national honor and its national faith. In connexion with his message he recommends to you to give the notice: you refuse to do it. Mr. Chairman, will any friend, or rather will any opponent of this measure, answer me this question: let him place himself, in imagination, in the British Parliament; carry the information to that Parliament which the Executive has communicated to Congress; let that he followed by a vote on the part of Congress, refusing to carry out the recommendation of the President in giving the notice, and will he not say that British statesmen will be fully authorized to draw the inference that the Congress of the United States is not prepared to go with the President in his declaration that the proposition submitted, rejected, and now withdrawn, is the *ultimatum* of the American Government? It does strike my mind, Mr. Chairman, if I occupied the position which I have supposed British statesmen to occupy, that my mind would be drawn very clearly to the conclusion that the American Congress are not prepared to concur in the opinion expressed by the Executive of the United States; and that, refusing to give the notice for the termination of the joint occupancy, the American Congress has brought itself to one of two conclusions, viz: either that the title on which the President so confidently relies is not clear to the mind of Congress, or else that the Congress of the United States is of the opinion that the Executive should submit, in conformity with the suggestion of the British minister in the close of his last communication, a more favorable proposition to the British government. Well, sir, I submit not to the American Congress, but to any member of it, whether he is prepared, by his course of conduct, to justify, on the part of Great Britain, an inference so clearly deducible from the course of conduct which we are called upon to pursue by those who oppose the giving this notice, and which is so manifestly opposed to the known sentiments and opinions of the American people? If we are determined, then, Mr. Chairman, not to sacrifice this territory, and not to submit to the British government a more liberal proposition than the one which has been rejected, is it not due to the American government—is it not due to her national character, to her national feelings, that she should no longer permit another power, however great, however haughty, however domineering, to enjoy in common with her rights to which she has *no* clear title, or to which she has no title whatever?

Mr. Chairman: Has Great Britain ever made a proposition to the United States—have her statesmen ever suggested a proposition of compromise upon this Oregon question which would meet the response of an isolated voice in the American Congress? Do gentlemen anticipate a more favorable proposition than the one which the British government has submitted to us? If so, I desire to be furnished with the reasons for that opinion. Here is her *ultimatum*, as her whole course of policy has evidenced. There is the *ultimatum*—perhaps, sir, *beyond the ultimatum*—of the American people, which has been submitted by our government. We are divided by a gulf; we will not cross it; and we have no reason to believe that the British government is prepared to meet us on our side. Our title is clear; our rights are undoubted; her's are the reverse. Unless, then, you intend to hold out inducements to the British government to anticipate a falling back, a surrender, a still further surrender on the part of the American government, it strikes my mind that the question

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requires prompt, energetic, decisive action on the part of our government—such action as is recommended in the President's message; such as is contemplated by the resolution on your table.

But there is another view, Mr. Chairman, in connexion with the state of the negotiation which I desire to submit to this House. If this Congress should adjourn without having authorized and empowered the Executive to give this notice for the termination of this joint occupancy, there is another inference which may be very clearly and distinctly drawn by the people and the government of Great Britain. Will they not be prepared to say to themselves and to the world, that there exists in the American government a division of opinion between these two departments of that government—the executive and the legislative—which weakens the action of the government, and enervates her energy and ability? The Executive marks out a course of policy evidencing a disposition on the part of that department of the government firmly, energetically to assert and maintain the rights of the government; Congress falters, falls back; Great Britain infers, and justly infers, that there exists on the part of our government such a diversity of sentiment between the two different departments of the government, that it is impossible for that energetic action which the occasion requires to be carried out, and those clear rights of our government properly to be maintained. Are gentlemen prepared by their policy and course of conduct, to authorize an inference of this character on the part of the British government? I am not indulging in our course of reflection so much from the apprehension that the British government will make these inferences; if it were not that in my humble judgment this course of conduct would authorize them to infer, and give the inference strength and importance, I would disregard such considerations. But I cannot say that such a course of conduct on our part would not authorize and justify an inference of this sort on the part of our opponents in this contest. Let Congress adjourn without giving the notice under this state of facts connected with the negotiation—under the fact that the recommendation has been made by the Executive—and that Congress has failed to carry it out; and will not both Great Britain and the civilized world who feel any interest in it, be authorized to draw this inference, that the "clear," indisputable, and "unquestionable" title of our government to the *whole* of Oregon, is not so strong and forcible as we have attempted to make it? But why, sir, after twenty-five years, or more than twenty-five years of negotiation, when the American Congress have before them the proposition which has been made upon the other side, and no substantial reason can be given why any other proposition will be finally agreed upon, when you have been informed by the executive department of the government—to whose hands this matter is specially committed—that no proposition will be made which this government ought to accept—when, under all these circumstances, you declare first your clear and indisputable title and right, and then refuse to assert that right, or to adopt measures for the preservation of that right, will it not in the eyes of the world weaken our title to Oregon, and throw a veil—I care not how thin—over that which we now consider so bright and clear, to our conception at least? Go to the French government, to the British government, to any other government, and, after the action of Congress, refusing to give this notice—refusing to take possession of what we declare and believe to be ours, and then tell me whether our rights are not weakened in the estimation of those governments; tell me whether our hand is not less strong than when we first entered into the contest? The world will so consider it, and will say there are shrinkings back, and misgivings among us; and we ourselves will look back to the crisis, which I consider the present moment to be, with regret that we allowed it to pass by without doing justice to ourselves, and without doing justice to the honor of our own nation.

It is with me, Mr. Chairman, a question involving our rights, and our final—I will not say acquisition—but our final, complete possession of the whole of this our own territory.

There is another view in reference to the negotiation, which I propose to submit to you, Mr. Chairman, and to this House. If gentlemen will put themselves to the trouble to investigate the negotiation between this government and the government of Great Britain, on the subject of Oregon, commencing with its earliest inception, and coming down to the present time, they will find that the same reasons which control the conduct of an individual in the management of his private affairs, ought sometimes to be applied to a nation in conducting affairs of national importance; and the very reasons which are now urged for the further postponement of action, efficient action on the part of our government, will be found to have exercised an undue influence in times gone by. I do not say, nor do I wish to be understood, as intimating that there ever has been a period, in the history of this negotiation, when action of this character has been so imperatively required on the part of our government as at the present government; but I do believe that the settlement of this Oregon controversy could have been made with less excitement, with less trouble, with less difficulty in past periods of our history, than it can be made at the present time.

Mr. Chairman, there is no greater error in the conduct of government, or in the conduct of private affairs, than giving way to the disposition of our nature, to postpone "the evil day," as it is sometimes termed. You will find that the postponement of the Oregon controversy, instead of opening the door for its amicable adjustment, on terms more satisfactory, and less calculated to create excitement, has, in each step of its progress, accumulated new and more insurmountable difficulties; and, to-day, we are perhaps further from an amicable adjustment of it than we have been in any past period of our history, unless decided, energetic action is taken to bring it about. What are the reasons urged for the postponement of action? Why, the precedent that it was postponed in 1818 and 1827, when this convention was made and renewed. Well, will any gentleman answer me what has the government made by the continued postponement of the settlement? Since the acquisition of our title from Spain, at every moment the difficulties have increased; they have never been lightened, and they never will be. If gentlemen will submit to my mind a course of reasoning which will show that at any future period this question can be better settled upon principles satisfactory to our country, then, perhaps, I might be prepared to go with them. But I look upon it that delay now, like delay in past times, will but increase the difficulty, heighten the excitement, and further and further prolong the period before a fair

and final settlement can be effected. Will gentlemen listen to me when I allude to a discussion familiar, very familiar, to the older heads in this House, and a discussion not very unfamiliar to those who, in common with myself, took their seats two years ago in this House? At that time the Oregon question attracted discussion not only here but in the other branch of Congress. Do you recollect the reasons then urged for the further postponement of energetic action on the part of our government? It was but a repetition of the argument made years before, as the history of the debates will show. You were told that negotiation was pending; that it would be improper for the legislative department of the government to interfere when the matter was in the hands of that branch of the government, which ought properly to consider it; and that when it was ascertained that negotiation could not be effected, then, and not till then, would be the time for the Congress of the United States to act. I recollect, while listening to remarks of this character, that fell from the lips of a distinguished senator—one whose voice always is listened to with attention and respect—that he told us (and others concurred with him) that the British government had reasons why the Oregon question should go on and be postponed to a later day, and that the British government never looked forward to the settlement of the Oregon territory as an agricultural territory, or with a view to manufactures, or to make it a permanent settlement; that they only wanted the right to the fur trade; that it was being exhausted and passing by; that at present it would bear but a small comparison to what it had been in former years; and that as soon as this interest on the part of the British government had ceased, we would have no difficulty in asserting the whole of our rights to Oregon. Well, sir, this argument is now at an end. You will not interfere with the executive department in determining in favor of this notice, because you will but carry out its recommendations; and I trust that American statesmen will no longer ask that this important result be postponed on the ground that the British government, when it has exhausted its interest in the fur trade, will voluntarily render and yield us up our own. No, Mr. Chairman; our right to Oregon—to the whole of Oregon—is clear and unquestionable; and I desire to see it maintained to the letter and the spirit by the energetic, efficient action of this House and of the other House of Congress.

We are told, that there are not inducements sufficient to carry our government rashly into a contest for this territory. I go not rashly. Sir, twenty-five years and more of negotiation, of reflection, of standing still, (if I may manuacture the term) cannot be considered rash or heedless. There is a duty which we owe not only to our government, as a government, but a duty which we owe to the people who have emigrated to the Oregon territory. Pardon me for a very few remarks on this branch of the subject. We are told if you postpone giving the notice—if you allow this joint occupation to continue, our people will be emigrating to Oregon, that we will be building up our defence in the hardy sons of the West who shall have gone there for the purpose of finding a permanent home; that we will be adding barriers and defences to our possession of the Oregon territory; and we are told in substantiation of this, that within the last two years the emigration thither has greatly increased in proportion to what it was a few years back; and that, drawing the fair inference from the past, we may conclude that, for the future, this tide of emigration will continue to roll into the Oregon territory until we shall have taken possession of it by our own people being permanently located in that country. If I mistake not the feeling and the spirit which has induced emigration to Oregon, it may be fairly attributable to the implied promise which the action of this government heretofore has held out to this people, that this joint occupancy would, before this time, have ceased, and their title to homesteads have been made secure and certain. Go ask them if they believed at the time that they abandoned their homes in our western States and emigrated to the Oregon territory that this joint occupancy was to continue from year to year, from time to time, and that they were to be left there without the protection of the laws of their country; that they would be left there with the title to every foot of land on which they have so located themselves uncertain and insufficient? They settle there not temporarily, but they build up for themselves home in that territory, which we say is ours, but which we fear to declare in such terms as shall authorize that emigrant people, when they plant themselves on any portion of the Oregon territory, to feel confidence that they are on ground consecrated to American freedom, and which shall never cease to be made prosperous and happy by the prevalence of republican principles. I ask you, if this is not the feeling under which this emigration is carried on to Oregon? Let this Congress adjourn without giving the notice—instead of it, proclaim by a joint resolution that it is the opinion of Congress that this joint occupancy shall continue from time to time—that we are not prepared to maintain and assert our unquestionable rights, but that we propose to do it at some future period—then, if mistake not the spirit of the West, that emigration is at an end. Can you induce a western man, who has so much public land, when there are so many inducements held out to him to emigrate where his settlement will be perfectly secure, and where the government will guarantee to them the title to the land, to abandon all this to go to country which we have asserted, by a mere declaratory resolution, to be ours, but our rights to which we are not yet prepared to maintain and defend?

But suppose that I am not well founded in the view which I have taken of the spirit and motive which have operated upon the minds of our people in causing this late increase of emigration to Oregon, and you take it for granted that the emigration will continue, and that, as time passes by, under this and other causes of a similar character, we should become greatly strengthened in our Oregon possessions: we now avow such to be our policy, and notify our opponent of the fact. Think you that the sagacity of Great Britain is less astute now than formerly? Will she slumber over her pretended rights? Will she sit quietly by and allow the United States to adopt a policy and push that policy vigorously forward to the manifest destruction of her claims and interest, without resorting on her part to some counteracting policy? Let us not deceive ourselves as to the character of those with whom we are dealing. Rest assured that if we do any sort to the course suggested, we shall be met at every step in our progress by similar measures—if not of the same kind, certainly in effect—by the British governme

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But it is said we shall have gone far enough when
e shall have passed our laws extending the juris-
ction of our courts over the Oregon territory, for the
otection of the citizens of the United States who
ay go to that country. I desire gentlemen to direct
eir attention, for a single moment, to the effect of the
ssage of such laws. For one, I am in favor of it.
esire to see the laws of the United States extend-
over the Oregon territory, so far as we can do it
nsistently with our rights, consistently with our
aty stipulations. But how long can such a state
things remain? Great Britain passes her laws,
tending her jurisdiction over this territory; you
ss your laws extending your jurisdiction; and
re is a territory under the operation of two sys-
ms of government, as widely separated from each
lier as the north and south pole. Here are the
inciples of American freedom, carried and borne
ong by the officers of the American government;
re are the citizens of the British government, min-
ing with our people, who have extended over them
e laws of their monarchical or despotic govern-
ent, under which they seek protection. Can
e different systems—can these laws of different
untries, like the citizens of those countries, com-
ingle one with the other, all going on in sweet
pleasant harmony? Can it be so? Must there
t be perpetual collisions and difficulties resulting
om this simultaneous operation of two different
stems of laws? It may be that such a state of
ings may continue during the twelve months for
hich your notice is given; but to say that this is
rerting our rights, and doing justice to those who
ve settled in the Oregon territory, in the indul-
ence of the reasonable expectation that they shall
protected, does not strike my mind as bearing
e force of reason or of justice. It cannot be
one. It is impossible that these two systems
continue to operate together for any great
ength of time. From this, I infer that it is the
uty of this government to show that we believe
regon is ours, and that we are determined to re-
in it; that it is our duty, *as soon as practicable*, to
ace the people of that country under the pro-
ction, the sole protection of the laws of the United
ates.
Mr. Chairman, there is one objection urged, and
e perhaps relied on with greater force than any
ther—one to which our attention has been drawn
the most of those who have discussed this sub-
ct on the other side. We are told that, by with-
olding the giving the notice first, our emigration
will go there, and, by that means, that the coun-
y will be taken possession of and our title be quiet-
settled; and next, that we are not now in a
ondition to defend our title and maintain our
ghts. I will ask gentlemen, when will this go-
rnment be ready? When will this government be
epared to maintain our just rights in the Oregon
rritory? Will gentlemen who follow me in this de-
ate, be so good as to inform the country to what
riod of time they look forward when the
nited States will be in a proper condition to defend
r national rights in the Oregon territory? Where is
e difficulty? Why are you not prepared to defend
Oregon territory and your rights in the territory?
it owing to the condition of your
vy? So far as your army is concerned, it is a set-
d principle in the government, if I understand

and appreciate our people aright, that the govern-
ment never shall be dependant on a standing army
for the protection of the rights of the people. You
can never induce, and I trust you will never de-
sire to induce, this government to create a large
standing army in time of peace as preparatory to
some future emergency which may require it. The
bulwark of the defence of our country lies in the
hearts and the spirit of the American people. It is to
the citizen soldier, and not the mercenary hireling,
that the American people look for the defence of
their rights in an emergency of this kind. Is your
navy not prepared? Mr. Chairman, I am not fur-
nished with the necessary information, nor should
I detain you if I was, to go into a discussion
of the condition and character of our navy. But
tell me, when we will be better prepared than
we are now? Will it be at some future period?
Are you prepared at once to make a heavy ap-
propriation for the increase of your navy? Will
this government ever be prepared, in a time of
peace, to pursue a policy of this kind? If so, it
will differ widely from the history of the past or
of Congresses preceding. And those who are
most anxious now for the settlement of the Oregon
question; and those who are in favor of postponing
it to a future period—many of them will be found
on common ground in warfare upon our little na-
vy—that gallant navy which needs no praise from
my hands; it is written in the history of the coun-
try.

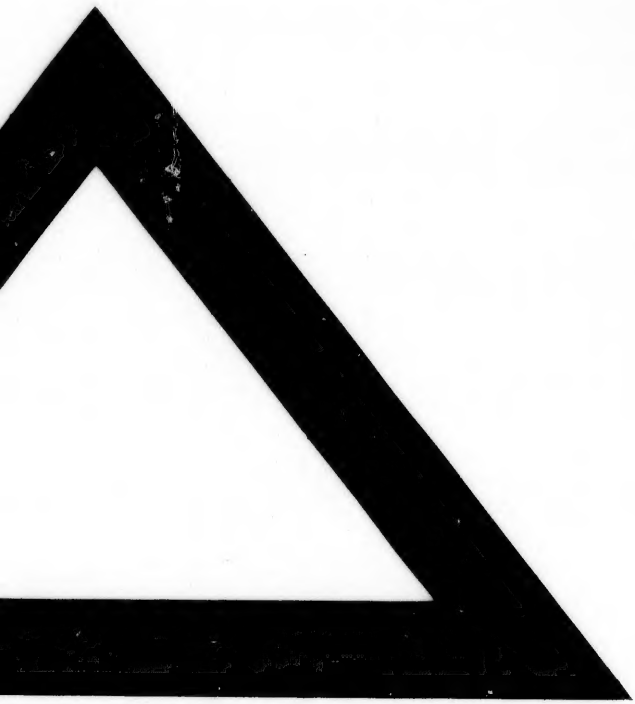
[Mr. C. here paused for a moment to inquire how much of his hour was still unexhausted; and having ascertained that he had but about ten minutes more, proceeded as follows:]

Mr. Chairman, I have exhausted more time upon the discussion of these one or two points than I had intended, and I fear I must pass by some others to which I had intended to refer. There was, however, one prominently brought forward in this discussion upon which I must bestow at least a passing thought. It is said by those who advocate it, that this is a peace measure, and by those who oppose it, that it is a war measure. I am not prepared to go the full extent with some who declare that the inevitable result of the passage of this notice will be to involve this country in a bloody and destructive war. Nor am I prepared, on the other hand, to go with those who fearlessly assert that there is no danger to result from our action in reference to Oregon. I plant myself on this ground, that the course which I propose to pursue is the one called for by the national faith and honor of my country; and I am in the prosecution of what I conceive to be the just rights of my government, and am endeavoring to carry out the policy best calculated to secure this end. If peace be the result, I shall gladly welcome it. If war be the consequence, we must meet it. It is a crisis not to be avoided, not to be evaded, but to be met with boldness, firmness, and decision. When we have discharged our duties, then, sir, it will be for another department of our government, and for the government with whom we are in collision upon this subject, to do what they may conceive to be their duty. If the result shall be inauspicious—if it shall involve us in a war—I will have the consoling reflection left that I have pursued a course of policy dictated by the best interests of my country, as far as I have been enabled to appreciate those interests. That we should suffer from a war, I do not pretend to deny; that we shall lose the Oregon

territory by resorting to a war, I utterly but respectfully repudiate the idea. Whenever this government shall be engaged in a conflict of this kind with the British government, or with any other government on earth, peace will never be declared upon terms leaving one foot of territory which has ever been consecrated to American freedom and American principles, afterwards to be profaned by monarchical or despotic principles. No; Canada may be acquired; I do not dispute that position of gentlemen who have argued this proposition before the House; but that Oregon will ever be abandoned peacefully, or in the struggle of war, my mind has never yet been brought to that conclusion, nor will it be. Sir, upon this day, this memorable, glorious 8th of January, let it not be said by American statesmen, in an American Congress, that this government can be weakened in, or deprived of, her just and unquestionable rights by a conflict with Great Britain, or with any other government. If war come, I venture the prediction that when it terminates, we will have the consolation of knowing that not a British flag floats on an American breeze; that not a British subject treads on American soil.

We have been asked to calculate the cost of a war with England, and to compare the result with the value of the territory involved in the issue; and in doing so gentlemen have been pleased to present to our contemplation a picture well calculated to sicken the heart of the patriot. The accumulation of a heavy and burdensome debt, thereby tending to the increased taxation upon the people; the loss of valuable lives in the bloody conflict; the destruction of our commerce, and the various interests of the country in intimate association with it; these, and many other considerations of a kindred character have been brought to our notice in most feeling and eloquent appeals, calling upon us to avert these paralizing efforts upon the industry and energy of our people. I fully appreciate the motives and feelings of those who have indulged in these reflections; but at the same time I must be permitted to respond to them, that it is not the simple question of the value of the territory in dispute to be placed in the opposing scale. There is a principle involved in the issue of far deeper interest, and involving far more important results. It is the principle of concession to British arrogance and British cupidity. Once establish the doctrine of concession of just and clear rights in the stead of a bold and fearless maintenance of them at every cost and hazard, and the days of American glory are numbered.

I desired to consider the proposition, which has been submitted to us in the form of an an amendment by the gentleman from Alabama, [Mr. Hilliard] to whose remarks, in support of the views he presented to the House I listened with deep interest, and with the course of whose argument I was gratified and instructed. I am not willing, however, to abandon the proposition recommended by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and to substitute in lieu of it the one submitted by the honorable gentleman from Alabama; and I will, with the utmost deference to that gentleman, give one or two reasons why I think that, with the views he has expressed—so nobly and so eloquently expressed—he ought to be willing to give the go-by to his amendment, and to stand with us in support of the original resolutions. Let us, who agree on this subject, meet on common ground in support of the resolution reported from the Committee on Foreign Affairs. What is the difference in these propositions? The resolution of the Committee on Foreign Affairs recommends that the President forthwith give the notice. The gentleman proposes, in lieu of that, to assert that the President be empowered to give the notice, whenever the public interests, in his judgment, require it. I consider that this proposition is evasive; and I aver that it must be so considered by this country, and by the British government. Why do you wish to empower the Executive to give the notice when the public interest require it, if, at the same time, we are not prepared to express the opinion that the public interest now requires it?

Sir, the President of the United States has submitted all the information, in connexion with this subject, which may properly be submitted, and which, in his opinion, may have any influence upon Congress. With this, he gives you his opinion that the notice ought to be given at once, that this joint occupancy shall forthwith cease. The gentleman from Alabama proposes now, that, instead of taking upon ourselves the responsibility of meeting the question and declaring that we agree with the President, and give it to him as our opinion that the notice ought to be given, and call upon him to do it under our instructions, that we merely say to him that he has the power to do it, and we shall leave to him to decide it. Is it the object of the gentleman from Alabama to place upon the Executive the responsibility of giving the notice when the public interest requires it? If so, the Executive has already taken that responsibility, so far as it can be placed upon the shoulders of any man, by the recommendation which he has submitted in his message. If you desire, then, not to relieve yourselves from the responsibility—and I call the attention of the friends of this measure to the distinction which I draw—if Congress is willing to assume the responsibility, if you believe the time has arrived when this notice should be given, when this joint occupancy should cease, when the rights of the government should be declared, and maintained, cost what it may, then meet it boldly; come up to the question, as presented by the report of the committee, and say to the President, cause the notice to be given. But do not avoid the responsibility; do not step gently behind the screen, and say to the President, "we decline giving an opinion ourselves as to the proper policy to be pursued at this time; but we will give you the power, (which perhaps he may already possess,) if, in your judgment, the interest of the country require it, to give the notice hereafter." I say let us have no evading of this question; if we believe the notice ought to be given, let us so declare by our action.

Such then, sir, are the considerations which have brought my mind to the conclusion that the time has arrived when the government of the United States should assert and maintain her just and indisputable rights to the Oregon territory; and that the policy indicated by the resolution upon your table is the proper initiatory step to the efficient and successful accomplishment of that object. I present them to the consideration of this House, and of my constituents, confidently anticipating from them a response as creditable to their hearts as it will be grateful to my own feelings.